IN·VIVID·GARDENS

MARGUERITE WILKINSON

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IN VIVID GARDENS

SONGS OF THE WOMAN SPIRIT

BY

MARGUERITE WILKINSON

(MARGUERITE OGDEN BIGELOW)

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TO
MY HUSBAND

228731

NOTE

Of the poems included in this volume, the following have been published in *The Independent:* "The Prayer of Summer," "The Nonconformist," "The Endless Quest," "The Answer" and "Fulfillment." "A Woman's Beloved: A Psalm" appeared in *The Craftsman;* "The Ultimate Victor" and "The Woman and the Prophet," in *The New York Herald;* "The Present: A Challenge" and "Equality," in *The Woman's Journal;* "The Song of the Bride to Be: A Woman's Epithalamium," in *The Forum;* "The Claim," in *The Munsey Magazine;* and "The Land of Orange Flowers" in *Good Health Magazine.* The thanks of the author are due to the proprietors and editors of these periodicals for permission to republish in the present volume.

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PART I

IN VIVID GARDENS

I sought a place of music and of light,
Whence I might greet the world with real
power
Of singing pressure in these human words
That are my tools. And hungrily I sought,
As one who starves will seek, mad with delay,
And thirstily, as desert wayfarers,
Alone, and spent.
Then joyously I heard—
Was it a voice melodic as the wind,
To speak divinely through a Muse's lips?
Or was it some dark Sibyl, splendid-souled
As tropic night? Or was it a far shout
From ringing days while yet the earth was
young
With primal heat and all the race lay white
Upon the anvils of the Universe?
Or was it a serener, later Word,
New spoken by the living lips of God,
That bade me enter into women's lives,
Resolved to know their travail and content,
To speak the hideous riddle of the scourge
Upon them laid since Force remade the world;
That bade me walk abreast of women's souls
To learn the secrets that they will not tell
For fear, or pride, or modesty, or love?
"These are the vivid gardens," was the Voice,
"Which one must enter gravely and with pain,

Seeking a place of music and of light
For revelation and for equity—
These are the vivid gardens—women's souls!"

. . . . . .

(Such flowers have I seen, of such fair hue,
Such firm, proud forests, such ambitious vines,
And such illuminous fruit of heavy hours,
Borne where the soul has fed on blood and tears,
That I would fain report them to a world
That has not yet full vision for the sight—
Such wild and rugged flamboyance of growth
As mocks the little housebound rules of now,
And threatens all the bondage of the walls
Where crevices occur—such have I seen.)
And I have noted such a pregnant power
As must produce a new variety
When our old customs cheapen, sour and stale.
Such would I herald and illuminate,
If but my speech be ample for the task,
If little words of mine have such glad force
To thrust aside a moment that dull cloud
Of veiling vaporish thought that hides the Truth,
The blessed Truth as I have seen it bloom
In vivid gardens, lusty, radiant, sweet.

THE GREAT WHITE LAW

The swift winds ravish the blessed sky,
Cloud enters cloud, soft sailing by,
The hills have breasts and the waters teem
With the great All-Father's procreant dream.

His smile is seen on the roadway bright,
Where the asters bloom with a grave delight,
Where the pollen flickers from flower to flower,
And the seedpods burst every sunny hour.

His thoughts are born where the summer reigns,
Where the dragon fly his bright mate constrains
To his tense embrace, where the queen of bees
From her bridal heights her pursuer sees.

His words are spoken where robins greet
Their brooding loves in a dalliance sweet;
Where the he-wolf leaps, where his strength is spent,
Where the she-wolf suckles her young, content.

His heart is known in the loves of men,
And the love that womanhood gives again,
  In eager lips, and in tender tears,
  In poignant joys, and in glowing fears.

Full many a law has the Father made
By which the myriad worlds are swayed,
  And all are holy, for man or beast,
  For the noblest great, or the weakest least.

But health and beauty, the onward urge
Of the human soul to the farthest verge
  Of spacious time—all issue straight
  From the fiat given for mate and mate.

WHO IS SHE THAT WAITS?

Who is she that waits, lithe-limbed and serene,
Where morning glories tremble into the day-time?
There is one chaste, haughty, well nigh invincible,
Clear-eyed and calm, to weigh well your words,
Able to withdraw and meet the eyes of all men steadily.
Who is she, intensively alive, throbbing with unspent life,
From sensitive finger tips to trained strongholds of the mind,
Bold and sure-footed, free and irresistibly magnetic?
Verily, she is the most perfect of the virgins.
Sound of body she is, she holds rich gifts in her warm arms:
Strongly moulded are shoulders and thighs,
Full, fair and round the divine breast of womanhood.
Alert and active is her mind; her nature loving, interested, dominant.
She is ready to give and to receive abundantly,
Ready to blossom and to bear the rich fruitage of love;
But now she is unconscious, she knows no need, no emptiness.

Where is he that can enter body, mind and spirit, bringing only what is pure?

Who is she that waits, vivid as a rose, tremulous, eager for joy?
Who is waiting where clematis curtains vibrate gently in the dark,
Where the delicate blossoms of the moonflower open their hearts to love?
There is one reaching out trembling fingers,
Looking with eyes of deep questioning into the eyes of another,
One who enfolds for the first time a newly won privilege and pain,
Putting aside virginity, tasting a new magnitude,
Ready to surrender all for love's sake, that he may rejoice.
She is the woman receptive, who is to become the life giver;
But now, where soft breezes caress the clematis,
She knows naught but to give and to spend for him she loves—
She would share his joy, she would become his glory.
And it is for this cause she hides him close, with thanksgiving,
For a woman is not as a man:
Men love the bodies of all sweet women,
And he that is born of the spirit loves the soul of one;

But the noblest women love the souls of all men, and admit one right of flesh and blood,
And she who yields her lips falsely, finds no joy.
To men, all women are accessible and one holy,
To women, all men are sacred and one accessible.
Therefore, let one come who is ready to meet this woman in love.

Who is she waiting weary and heavy laden,
Where violets and meadow rue shoot new life through the sodden soil?
There is one with wide eyes circled and dark,
Who walks slowly, lest she should fall.
She is the woman expectant, about to be sanctified,
Learning patience, accepting the offerings of pain and tears.
She is the life-giver, potent in motherhood,
Greatest of all from generation to generation;
Not a mother of children only, not merely a mother of the bodies of mankind,
But a proud mother of sane men and women,
Of fathers and mothers most glorious, yet to be,
Of heroes and statesmen, poets and artists,
Of practical workers, both women and men.

And she is the mother of their minds equally
with their flesh,
And of the renewed spirit of the world, forever
and ever—
She is a link in the chain of eternity.
She will descend gladly into the valley where
the death mists hang,
And drag thence the beginnings of another
life;
She will know the wildest throbbing of nerve
and tension of sinew,
The harsh agony of pressure, the strain and
huge ache of passing,
The limitless fatigue.
And also, in the fulness of time, it shall be
hers
To travail for the souls of her children,
And for him who rests in her bosom.
Do men alone live for the mass and for futu-
rity?
Do we, indeed, live only for ourselves and a
few individuals?
Have we not, rather, swelled the sum of the
world's greatness from the beginning,
Equally with the men, by toil and tears,
Even when down-trodden, degraded and en-
slaved?

Hearken, sons of men, for I bespeak and
summon one of you
Worthy to censure this woman, or to lay his
burden upon her!

Who is she that waits fulfilled in all gentleness,
Free, chaste, generous as ever, but calm and
at peace?
Who is waiting where goldenrod and purple
asters glow in sprightly profusion?
Lo! there is one with gray or fading hair, with
eyes of wise, kind depth.
All things become her well, for she has strug-
gled and enjoyed,
Lived, suffered and been purified.
Nothing can she do in benevolence and
strength
That can detract from the dignity of her ful-
fillment.
Hers are bright walks in sunny air,
Long hours of holy meditation,
The love and reverence of those to whom she
has given.
Hers are all occupations, all learning, all
songs, all poems, all creations.
Hers is counsel and the knowledge of human-
ity—
For the world needs the wisdom of fulfilled
and honorable women.

What she has spent has returned to her in infinite spiritual values;
She is become a glowing light for all mankind,
And hers is the right to spend each day as she would wish to spend her last.
Above all else, it is hers, so long as she shall live,
To forward her immortal spirit within the gates of God, forever,
The woman triumphant!

THE PRAYER OF SUMMER

BOY AND GIRL:

From the nights of mist and moonshine,
From the ardent days of summer,
From the daisy dimpled meadow,
And the milkweed scented roadside,
And the quiet pools sequestered,
Where the water lilies blossom
And the dragonflies are mating—
Hasten we into the woodland,
There to bow before our Father,
Offering the prayer of summer.

THE BOY:

Grant me greater body prowess,
Healthier skin and tauter sinew,
Speed in swimming and in running,
Hardihood and strength in climbing
Upward from the river valley,
Where the turtles plunge and paddle,
Upward on the sun-baked hillside
To the crags by hemlocks guarded;
There to look abroad and visit
With glad eyes the spreading distance;
There to look abroad and challenge
All the future and the distance
To a fight—the future beckons!
Certainty of quick decision
Grant me when the need is greatest,

In the game or in the battle.
And at sundown let me listen
But a space to Thy great music—
Windswept chord and ripple's rapture;
Grant me girth and height, full stature
Of the manhood I am making.

THE GIRL:

Grant me health, the flush of wonder
Won by riding through the woodland,
Or by tennis, or by rowing;
Grant me swift, untrammeled action
Of my mind and of my body,
Greater verve and proud endurance
Of each little daily hardship,
Soundest nights and vivid daytime.
All my human, woman nature
Let me find alert and active,
Natural and bright in blossom
As the open fields of clover.
I would be as lithe and supple
As the willows by the river;
I would climb the highest hilltops
That have known my brother's footsteps;
I would read on sunny beaches
Many laws Thy hands have graven—
So to learn the mighty secret
Through the woodland softly whispered,
Of my life and of its meaning.

BOTH:

Where the wood is darkest, deepest,
We, Thy children, bow before Thee,
Claiming bounty of Thy bounty—
Health and strength and poise of body
And of mind, a drawing nearer
To our fullest human beauty—
In the nights of mist and moonshine,
In the ardent days of summer,
Offering the prayer of summer.

SONGS OF THE WOMAN SPIRIT

From deepest fórest umbrage, where vines
were matted dense,
From new-born pools of water, from sky-flung
mounds immense,
From ages never numbered, and times out-
worn, I cry
My message and my story, to hush a living
lie!

For still I claim the surging of blood once fiery
hot,
Rejoice in tireless sinews, though now I know
them not,
And feel fierce joy of battle with beasts that
once I slew—
In those glad days of struggle, I proved my
birthright true.

And oh! the nights of summer, when I drank
deep and long
Of blood that I had vanquished, and sang a
savage song,
And pressed earth's raw, ripe fruitage to
lips untainted then,
And knew the shock of plunging to cool
ponds in the fen!

And oh! the nights of summer, half battle and
half rest,
When first I clasped his forehead to my round,
perfect breast,
When first, with sharp embraces, we wrestled in the night,
When first, with throes triumphant, I paid
for his delight!

And oh! the days of winter, when in the cold
and wild,
With limbs no longer nimble, I travailed for his
child,
And fought the wolves at sundown, impelled
by love to fight—
With firebrands red, I fought them, in all
my mother might!

Unchallenged was my birthright, my place beside the man,
Until the beasts were conquered, and the succeeding plan
Of an imperious Nature was satisfied
through me;
Then, by my power of life-gift, his slave I
came to be.

Because my body weakened by birth pangs oft
sustained,
He swore God made me humble and bragged
of what he gained,
He swore God made me humble and lifted
him on high,
He made a myth of Adam to pass my birth-
right by.

. . . . . .

The forests, burned and girded, came crashing
to the earth,
By him the beasts were mated, for him they
came to birth,
To him the quarry yielded bright treasure
ages old,
For him my heart was cheated, for him my
breasts were sold!

Still hot I feel the scourging of whips he
wrought for me,
And still I loathe the passion my flesh bore
helplessly—
In harems we were herded, degraded by his
lust,
To shake the chains a little had laid us in
the dust!

He knew a hundred women, self chosen, of the best,
He bought my lips' caresses, I toiled for him unblest;
I might not choose my lover, yet for him I must bear,
If he should look upon me with eyes that found me fair.

To him whose lust had bound me, no more I gave my mind,
I pampered him, amused him, and to his wrath inclined,
I cheated him with laughter and tricked him with a kiss,
The master of my body, I pierced his soul by this.

Sweet vengeance! yet all hungry my human spirit sped
Back through the ranging eons to find a comrade, dead,
A mate who knew me human—not thus, for best and least,
Allowing wings angelic with limits of the beast.

My sons with old world forces a heavy battle
bore,
Grew stalwart in the struggle and triumphed
more and more;
But my poor woman daughters, half garish
and half pale,
Were bond slaves of the body. God let the
truth prevail!

THE PRESENT: A CHALLENGE

Are we, indeed, but things of pleasure,
  Sweets of life for the lightest mood,
Gilded and trimmed, a flippant treasure,
  Handled and cheapened, spurned or wooed?
    Listen, you who believe this lying,
      Wild on the winds a chorus swells,
    And I hear the woman heart replying,
      Fool! go find you a cap and bells!

Burdened and bruised, shall we go choking,
  Forever, down to the dust at your feet,
You your own wrong discreetly cloaking,
  Who doubt our souls, though our lips are sweet?
    Ay, sweet enough, too sweet for your winning—
      At last we are out in the open air,
    Where our voices sound for a new beginning—
      Beast, go back to your jungle lair!

Strong in labor and self-reliance,
  We were born for the cause, the fight,
The world-old travail, the new defiance,
  The proudest place and the fullest right.

Then shall we say, when our youth is
tender,
"None there is who can kill this lie.
Body, your utmost tribute render,
Soul, go out in the dark and die!"?

No! For the cleansing winds are blowing
Over the earth, and the chorus swells
To a paean huge. Man's power is growing
Outward to reach a hundred hells.
Frank-eyed, clean-limbed brother, my
dearest,
Who will not take where you may not
give,
In you is our mighty hope read clearest.
Man, come into my heart and live!

THE PRESENT: A CLAIM

All the world is mine,
  Mine and yours, brother;
All the stars that shine,
  All the winds that blow,
All the living flowers
  God has planted, brother,
For your eyes' delight
  And my pleasure glow.

Birth and growth for me,
  As for you, brother,
Mighty destiny,
  Issuing from warm flesh;
Labor, passion, joy—
  We shall know them, brother,
Till our carnal life
  Feeds the earth afresh.

At your side I stand,
  Of a right, brother,
Power in my hand,
  Glory in my heart;
Where your children dance,
  My children sing, brother,
And as you have served,
  I have done my part.

Ask a guerdon bright
For your toil, brother;
Such a day's delight
I could claim as well.
Travail, toil and bonds
Know my body, brother—
To the highest heavens
I have looked from Hell.

Long as life endures,
You and I, brother,
Claiming mine and yours,
Live to be divine;
From the rising sun,
To the setting, brother,
All the world is yours,
All the world is mine!

THE PRESENT: A SONG OF TRIUMPH

I have taken once more my birthright,
  O vine blossoms, bloom and be glad—
'Twas sorrow that ever I lost it,
  The trees of the forest were sad;
For I was a mother of children,
  But never a mother of men,
And never a mother of women,
  Alas! I was impotent then.

I have taken once more my birthright,
  O wolves of the forest, beware!
My throat is alive with the war-cry,
  The song of the spirit. I fare
To a battle that surely will crown me
  With glorious peace; I befriend
The best in the man, in the woman.
  O wild forest singers, attend!

I have taken once more my birthright,
  O pools of the forest, my flesh,
Long soiled by the passion of ages,
  Is yours to restore, to refresh!
I spring from the dark to my freedom,
  Exultant and choosing my way,
Athrill with the glorious sunshine
  That circles the world of to-day!

THE FUTURE: A SUMMONS

Come, sing a paean, sing a song of gladness,
Thongs that have bound us, swiftly now we break;
Frail limbs we strengthen, giving joy for sadness,
Dull eyes unclosing, bidding sleepers wake!

Come, we are potent, floods of life are flowing
Through veins once sluggish, muscles once inert;
Come, let us take his hand and prove by growing
That mind and body live and are alert.

Come let us take his hand and call him brother!
Once he was blind, but now, with vision clear,
Loves for one home, one father and one mother,
Honors our strength and bids us hold him dear.

Up, ever up, the highest heights ascending,
Till we can hear eternal music ring,
The spirit man and spirit woman blending,
Till, reunited, each to each we cling!

THE NEW REDEEMER

A RHAPSODY

O ye winds that sweep the high arched skies,
And O strong stirrings of the cedars,
Sing again and yet again in triumph,
The majesty of a man's self mastery!

Fierce and eager colors of the rich sun,
Golds and reds of reflected glories,
Picture me the holiness of unstained flesh!

O ye wild untainted perfumes of a thousand
blossoms,
Rival if you can the perfect sweetness of his
breath!

Nay, sun and wind and flowers,
And the throb of life in the air of God,
May not rival nor excel his perfection,
They only contribute to it;
They do not explain him,
But they are one with the unsullied and perfect
son of God.

He has strong thews and sinews,
Mighty limbs, a deep, slow-heaving bosom;
He takes from the swift winds an everlasting
gift.

Bright hair, full-shining eyes, and exquisite
flush of the skin are his;
He has taken them from the beloved sun,
But from the spirit of God is his manly glory.

He has said in his heart, yea, and aloud to man-
kind shall he say,
"Lo! I bend me not above woman till I meet
her whom my soul loves;
I will not soil myself with the unclean woman,
I will not selfishly defile the clean woman, with
marriage or without.
I bear the burden, I accept the struggle—I am
content.
I hold myself in all that I have or am,
Sweet and unstained, perfect and ready
For that woman of God who is worthy of me;
That I may be lovely in her sight,
And that our union be a holy thing,
Honored of God, attended by His love.
For where love is and passion is controlled,
There is all high, pure, beautiful, worthy of
God;
But where passion is and love's bright face is
hidden,
There is life low, foul, ugly, and there God
blushes!"

Out of the dusky light of pain and sorrowing,
Arise, O tender voice of humankind, and sweetly and serenely sing!
Lo! ye harlots, one comes who points the way to your redemption!
Lo! daughters of men, one comes who has compassion on your travail!
Hail! blessed and honored woman whom his soul loves,
Whom he has singled out to be his bride!
Know that blessed are the fingers that lay hold upon him,
Consecrated are the white breasts where he lays his face!
Perfectly he will give the gift of gifts with most complete joy,
For he is more precious than most precious gems,
In her eyes who with just reverence looks upon him,
In her eyes who has won him.

Of those who approach near to woman, only he is worthy of her travail,
Worthy to fill her body with the fruitage of his rich love;
He, alone, of a right may stand beside her, demanding her best,
For he is at one with her, equal, and at peace,
Since he has made his body to tally with his soul.

Sing ye his glory, O winds! Burn it deep
with thy rays, O sun!
Mirror his fertile splendors, O thriving blos-
soms!
O tender voice of humankind, speak his praise,
thank God for him!

For that man is worthy of the day of life's
sweet pleasure,
Who has held himself proud and pure as in
virginity,
For the woman his soul loves!

EQUALITY

Mated to stand together
  Proudly, and side by side,
In flesh, in mind, in spirit,
  Is the bridegroom more than the bride?

Is the father more than the mother?
  Never, since time began,
Since the tale of life-gift opened,
  Was the woman less than the man.

Born to an equal glory,
  Out of an old delight,
Urged by a paean mighty,
  Into an equal fight,

They shall go on together,
  Surely, and hand in hand,
Victors upon the hilltops,
  Strong for a God's command!

THE WOMAN AND THE PROPHET

A BALLAD

A prophet spoke to a woman brave,
  A woman whose eyes were deep and sweet,
And he said, "O woman, thy golden hair
  Hangs low to thy tender feet,

"Thy flesh is less than my flesh can bend,
  Thy strength is less than my strength can break,
And yet a word of thy lips I ask,
  A thought, for wisdom's sake.

"I love mankind, love high and low,
  I long to give them a message true,
Yet I speak to them and they will not hear—"
  Said she, "Is thy wisdom new?"

"I fasted and prayed," he said, "and spoke;
  My heart was steeped in the thing I said,
But they turned from me for a clown's dull jest—"
  Said she, "Hath thy body bled?"

Then the prophet rose and touched in amaze
  His sound white flesh that was delicate,
And the woman laughed in his face and said,
  "Shall a prophet hesitate?

"Lo! I am a woman, scorned of men
For my round white breasts, and my woman's heart,
Yet I scorn you men who would do great deeds
And will not dare the smart!

"Do you know that for every man that lives
One woman's flesh hath been wrenched and torn?
That because of pain new beauty lives,
New magnitude is born?

"Do you think, because you are manly made,
You may wear all glowing crowns at will,
Becoming kings and poets and gods,
With never a tear to spill?

"Smile, bow and murmur thy words at ease,
Perchance the indolent will attend—
But think not all mankind to win,
With just small coin to spend."

The prophet knelt where her golden hair
Swept wild and free round her body sweet,
And he bowed him low in humility,
And kissed her tender feet.

"For," he said, "in thy heart, not mine, is truth,
And the best of truth thou hast given me;
I go full-poised to the struggle now,
That the world may nobler be."

Then he went and gave to the world his word,
His mite of truth, and, in giving, died;
But when his ashes were scattered far,
Men claimed him with joy and pride.

. . . . . .

With sad, sweet eyes, and with close-bound hair,
The woman who sent him lived alone,
For when she had pierced his heart with truth,
She had pierced and slain her own!

THE TWO LOVES

Two loves there are that claim mankind,
And one has eyes, but one is blind;
  And one is born of flesh and will,
  But one can all the law fulfill.

One chooses lightly, colors fair,
Rich charms of sight, full floating hair;
  One sees an inward angel rise
  In might before a paradise.

One seeks and wins for self and sense,
Then crushes love for fires intense;
  One guards and tends and teaches strength,
  And lifts love into Heaven, at length.

One claims love as a needed sweet,
Then treads it out beneath rough feet;
  One bleeds and dies for love alone,
  Or loving lives, love all unknown.

One furnishes a fleeting joy,
Of time-tried gold, the brief alloy;
  One builds forever, buoyantly,
  The pillars of eternity.

Two loves there are that claim mankind,
To heal or devastate the mind,
  But you with hearts divinely wise,
  Know which is blind, and which has eyes.

Ay, rest is sweet, and pillowed ease has charms,
Success can lull us to a vast delight,
And Victory is a lover in whose arms
Both days gone by and days to come seem bright.
More tonic are the myriad wild alarms
That rouse our human nature from warm night,
Stripping soft wrappings from us lest the harms
Of too great pleasure be the spirit's blight;
For always crowns are less than bravery
And kisses less than love, praise less than deeds;
The hero finds new fights eternally,
The savior of the people finds new needs—
To arms, my soul! and with a grand unrest
Rejoice to glorify the endless quest.

THE ULTIMATE VICTOR

LIFE:

Man-child, face me, know me well—
Much of Heaven and much of Hell.
Toys and ease are for the fool.
Fight you must if you would rule;
And, if battle you begin,
Know that surely I shall win.

THE MAN-CHILD:

Strong and taut my muscles are,
Life, I see you from afar,
Trodden down by my young feet,
Forced to yield me guerdons sweet.

LIFE:

Laughter have I for the threat!
You have known no burden yet;
For those muscles you must win
Food and shelter—haste, begin—
And the winning, day by day,
Spends their strength, entails delay;
For, to conquer me there needs
More than flesh that burns and bleeds.

THE MAN-CHILD:

More I have than sinews strong,
Powers of mind to me belong,
Knowledge new proclaims my sway,
Heralds me your lord to-day.

LIFE:

But that power I can destroy;
Lordliness, without alloy,
Is for none that I have known,
I am monarch all alone.
Brawny arm, or bosom bare,
Stalwart shoulders, shimmering hair,
Have strange power to lure the mind,
Bent as tree tops in the wind.
Let the lips of love draw near,
Children's voices, fresh and clear,
Of your substance born, begot—

THE MAN-CHILD:

That is but the common lot!

LIFE:

Then the burden, without grace,
Soon shall bend your sodden face,
Till you bite the dust at last,
Burdenless, I hold you fast!

THE MAN-CHILD:

But know this, though flesh should fail,
Though the mind should not prevail,
They can soothe your ache and smart,
Who have courage in the heart.

LIFE:

When you sweat beneath my load,
Know my pressure, feel my goad;
When you eat my bitter bread,
Piteous and uncomforted;
When, with haggard, hungry eyes,
You discern the rotten lies,
Hidden, where you thought most true
Bloomed my flowers fresh for you;
When you see how dully ends
All you sought—fame, fortune, friends;
When my power has bred disease
In such limbs and looks as these,
Which now are yours, but soon may be
Rank and wan as misery;
When you feel me work within,
Impulses as mad as sin
Shall torment you, fear and doubt
Shall cast your vaunted courage out.

THE MAN-CHILD:

Though you suck the blood of strength
From my limbs and cheeks at length;
Though you doubly lie and cheat,
Till my mind must own defeat;
Though to death you lure me on,
Unrewarded, withered, wan,
Courage shall not faint or fall—
I, who little have, give all;
Living, though I try and fail,
Yet, at last, I shall prevail;
Having tried all other ways,
Dying, I shall win your praise!

LIFE:

Praise and blame are not for me.
Thousands, later on, may see
Heroism now unknown,
Or may not; I claim my own.
What of life to you I gave,
Made you mine as tool or slave.

THE MAN-CHILD:

Slave I am not; look and see.
Life, I do not yield! For me,
Praise or blame, or dark or light,
Upward, onward, I will fight;
Bruised and burdened, without rest,
Yet shall courage meet the test;

Blinded, buffeted, betrayed,
I may be, but never swayed
From my course; and, yielding breath
At the last; to bitter death,
I shall cry a challenge still—

LIFE:

Then I bend me to your will!

Make straight a path through untilled lands,
  Through groves of lusty trees;
Make straight a way o'er roughened steeps,
  A way o'er swinging seas;—
    For the old path was a good path
      For the old who walked thereon,
    But for me and mine the rude path,
      The crude path, is the good path;
    For my young feet, the rude path
      Is best to tread upon.

I have left the safe and easy house
  For a habitation wild;
I have left the harbor's rest secure
  For the waves by tempests piled;
    Sweet food and drink and the old loves
      I left on the way I trod,
    But for me and mine the hard ways,
      And the barred ways are starred ways;
    For my strong limbs the hard ways
      Are the ways that lead to God!

Long have we waited for her, yet she comes
At last, of all vain fancies dispossessed
And by the ages' mastery made fair,
The perfect woman!
Of the deep woods sprung,
Lithe as the birches, hardy as the pine,
And nourished of wild berries and wild blood,
She knew at first but instincts swift and sweet—
To eat, to sleep, to mate, to bear, to fight;
Untrained, unskilled and never understood
Was each proud impulse, mad and yet quite sane.
For reasons all unknown were hate and love
Born in her, brought to life and given rein
To work their utmost will of ruin or health.
The dupe of Nature, like her human mate,
She took life's maddest summer to her arms
And hugged it close, nor dreamed that all its heat
Must bring sure travail to herself, her sex,
And, latterly, to all the human race.

Then sullen peace her destiny obscured;
For, as the sunlight hides the brooding storm
That, seeming silent, lives in sultry air,
So she, in those wild days of physical force,
Bowed, seeming mute, to man's rude mastery.

Her heart in bondage, as she weaker grew,
Smouldered a hidden flame, brooded a storm,
Deep hidden in behavior sunny sweet,
But sweet perforce and by sly artifice,
Not glorified by spontaneity.

A thousand myths around her rang and clashed
Sharp challenge to the vanguard of the Truth.
Some said, who little thought, "She has no soul,"
And others, gentler, "Chiefly soul is she";
And others, "She is merely motherly,
And, of her glorious travail dispossessed,
Loses the heritage of this human life,
The vital consciousness of joy or pain."
And, thinking this, they built for her one throne,
Whereon to reign; or else one bitter Hell,
Into whose personal perdition cast,
'Twere sin for her to leave for highest Heaven.
One glory far outshining all the rest,
As sun does stars, they granted; but the rest,
With little reason, heavily they seized,
Saying, "Who hath the sun need never tire
Of his sharp, passionate beams, nor tiring wish
The sane and lucid Heaven of nightly calm—
No change and no divine alternative—
She is a mother, or a thing of flesh,
Dull, meaningless and void."

And thus they spoke,
Who saw but one relation in this life
For her, and that the one in which themselves
Had share. Yet for themselves they lightly found
A myriad ways to serve the Highest Will.
Better, they claimed, that virgins free and pure
Be seized by grizzled ruffians, and bereft
Of every power to govern heart and mind
And breast and limb and life, than, failing love,
To miss the breeding power that gives us sons.
The storm that brooded grew, now rumbles near,
And all the world with questioning is dark,
Where those who hate her ever say too much,
Because their hate is craven, and those who love
Too little say because they feel too much,
And feeling, fight half armed.

Break, break, dull clouds!
Roll on, O wondrous storming voices all!
Beat rains, and, O ye winds, blow, blow us clean,
And cool us as the actual earth is cooled,
When summer storms, departing, yield at length
Their treasured bow. From out the storm shall speak

The quiet but far-reaching voice of Truth,
Brooking no argument and no defiance,
Which shall proclaim her. For she comes at last,
Our great Aurora whom all dawns have sought,
Our fair first sister, summing womanhood
In fullest power, a stalwart human type,
A heroine to meet a hero's mind
And call him comrade, lover, husband, son,
In perfect bonds of perfect sympathy;
Not gray and nervous, hailing from vain nights,
When day's unfinished task was still pursued,
While stars, insulted, beckoned her to bed;
But strong of loin as she is broad of brow
And great in mental as in physical worth,
And well abreast of that which suits her time,
Through her the symbols of our glory shine—
Strength, poise and prowess, hardihood and love,
The arms of righteous wars, the arts of peace,
The tender look of mates well satisfied,
The faces of the Future's children, glad
Because of age-long prophecy fulfilled.

THE WOMAN OF NOW

We have suffered ages long,
For the sake of man and child,
For many births enforced,
By bitter lust defiled;
We have tasted shame and the lash,
And the conqueror's harem filled;
We have drunken deep of tears,
Of bitter tears distilled.

To-day I give my love
And I will not rest in chains,
Higher than love with force,
Is the love that force restrains.
Warm lips were made for my own,
Strong arms may the distance span,
But I go full-poised at his side,
If ever I walk with a man.

And now, if I be loved,
I must be loved for my best;
He shall honor mind and heart,
Who slumbers on my breast.
Till my spirit find her own,
World without end I wait,
And I will not give myself,
Till I find my perfect mate!

PART II

THE ANSWER

Once (and perchance it will happen again),
There was a chorus of young voices eager to know what love is
And how it may be recognized.
And all the worlds of God and all His laws combined to answer them,
But few heard.
Love is not joy in the body nor joy in the beautiful,
It is not passion, nor is it passionless,
But these things love does and by these it may be known.
Love stands armed in the house door to protect the mother
And gives the strength of the body to nourish the child.
Love faces travail and the chance of death undaunted.
It nurses sickness, enriches poverty, and laughs at ill report;
It fills with strong wine the chalice of courage.
Love makes truth out of falsehood and control out of lawlessness;
It places the spirit on a throne over the body.
Know that when you have seen these things you have seen love.

THE LAND OF ORANGE FLOWERS

There's a dear land where the orange blossoms
blow!
There's a far land where the living waters flow!
In the tender, dreamy light,
Is a vision here to-night,
Of the dear land, of the far land, where the
orange blossoms blow.

In the good land where the mating robins call,
Where the soft concealing shadows rise and fall
On a face I long to see,
There are arms held out to me,
Much imploring, deep adoring, where the
mating robins call.

In the glad land where the gentle breezes
breathe,
Fairy garlands, Love, together we shall
wreathe;
Heart to heart and hand in hand,
Love, together we shall stand,
Chained with garlands fast together, where the
gentle breezes breathe.

On the shore-line where the living waters flow,
We shall watch the golden sunbeams come and go;
In the shadow land of mating we shall stay,
Finding faith and hope and love for every day;
Where the gentle breezes kiss us, we shall rest,
Flower-crowned, and chained and bound, among the blest;
In that glad land we shall know,
All the vision's glint and glow,
In the dear land, in the far land, where the orange blossoms blow.

BETROTHAL

I have found me a man, a man to love me,
He giveth rich gifts and a priceless name,
He hath sworn that no other shall live above me,
No heart shall shelter a purer fame.

He giveth rich gifts, heart-thrilling kisses,
Tender and sweet as the quickened spring,
Tender and sweet as the gentle blisses
Of moonflower vines that the night winds swing.

He hath given me tears, in his clear eyes shining,
Those gentle eyes, looking leal and true,
Whose long, dark lashes would thwart divining,
Unless my eyes were to pierce them through.

Yea, he is strong, but his touch is tender,
And he is sweet as the perfume, blent
Of orange and rose, where the ranches render
To sunlit breezes a subtle scent.

I have found me a man, I have held and made him,
What first was good I shall make complete;
No other woman like me hath swayed him,
Nor bowed his shoulders to kiss her feet.

I have found me a man, from himself I bought
him,
Gold from the dross and better from worse;
No other woman like me hath taught him
The great white law of the universe.

No other hath said: "We shall dwell together,
Not thou the ruler, nor servant I,
But mighty equals to face all weather,
Who love one God and that God on high;

"Who take the good of the world and offer
What each hath taken with each to share,
Resolved in love but the best to proffer,
Forever ready the best to dare."

. . . . . .

Heart of my heart, O my life's great glory,
Promise of peace that I wait for long,
This is the pith and the glow of my story,
Since love's great beauty hath made me
strong:

I have found me a man, let creation hearken,
A man who loves me by day, by night,
In the rash, red dawn, when the shadows
darken—
I have found me a man, and a soul's delight!

TREASURES

Think you that I shall not treasure
Every kiss that you have given,
That first touch upon my fingers,
In the shadow of the garden,
As a fairy moth's wing tender?

Think you that I shall not treasure
That warm bloom of purest passion,
Where the clematis, a-tremble,
Screened red lips with red lips meeting?
Or the many true love-blossoms,
Lightly, fragrantly, serenely,
Blown against my throat and tresses,
In the gentle, cooling night wind?

They are jewels I have chosen,
Flowers all, that I have gathered
From the garden of my lover,
From his treasure house of wonder;
Light and rest and bloom of beauty,
For the life that we are living.

Nay, more dear, I even treasure
Full blown roses yet ungathered—
Bloom of love upon my bosom,
For your lips and fingers waiting;
Sweet, ah piercing sweet, they quiver,
Yet unknown and unacknowledged.

Think you that I shall not treasure
Every word that you have spoken,
Every look of love and rapture
From your blue eyes outward shining?

Dearer even than your kisses,
That first solemn, shy, "I love you,"
In the darkness softly uttered;
That repeated, sweet, "I love you,"
As another step we mounted,
Or another gateway opened;
That mute, precious, proud, "I love you,"
Heard distinct, when wiser speaking
Evanescent is, and fruitless;
Or that cresceive, huge, "I love you,"
Rousing all our human nature,
Drawing, like a mighty magnet,
Each to each our metal nearer,
Flesh to flesh and self to other,
Life to life and soul to soul, dear.
Think you that I shall not treasure
Every true love sign and token?
By the God that gave our substance,
And the laws that govern substance,
Gave the real, primal beauty
Of a man and of a woman,
Gave their God-like power of life-gift;
By the law that made us dual,
Each, alone, not quite perfected,

Joined, an integer triumphant—
Every kiss of yours I treasure,
Every look and word remember,
And I swear that we, together,
Shall a little draw the shadows
From the clouded form of Beauty,
Till we see her limbs and features,
And reveal them clear to others.

Pudency inglorious leaving,
I believe that love is holy,
At its height, an act of worship;
Verily, an acquiescence
In the law God gave for nature.
Else, why blooms the flower sweetly,
When the pollen crowds the pistil?

Ah, my dear, when we are ready,
Strong in spirit as in body,
We shall make in love together,
Human and divine communion.

WITH NATIVE CANDOR

Do you love me, dear, in the wildwood way,
  With the love that runs alert in the night,
  And swells wild throats with a wild delight,
That seeks and gets, and forgets with the day?

Do you love as the eagles love in the sky,
  Or the mad, majestic beasts of the earth,
  When the spring is new? Is there mighty
    mirth
In yielding strength, or the rage of the eye?

Under the same bright sun you dwell,
  And the same earth yields her life to you;
  If you love as her other children do,
Who shall rebuke? Not I! 'Tis well.

But if this be all—if your heart be void
  Of the priceless thing that proclaims the
    man,
  That stays the arch in the perfect span
From the beast to God—then is love destroyed.

For above the knees and above the breast,
  My longing rises and strives to win
  The highest shrine. I would enter in
Where the brute is least and the man is best!

UNISON

Up from the heart's warm depths,
Up from the centers of life,
Rushes a song to Heaven,
A song of joy;
For, in the fulness of time,
And by His mighty law,
God has given us love
Without alloy.

Flesh that is sound and sweet,
Spirits that strive and win,
Hopes of a human life
Almost divine—
These are our priceless dower,
Blessing, and source of strength;
By their increasing light
Our lives shall shine.

Up from the heart's warm depths,
Up from the centers of life,
Rises and rings a psalm,
O'er self and sense—
Love that is high and pure
Lives and endures to the end,
Conquering lesser loves
By love immense!

THE SECRET

Why are we great in each other's eyes and why
is there no rivalry between us,
What is the secret of the joy of our life?

It is this, O beloved, that you, on my breast
and in my heart,
Are as clean, as moral, as beautiful as I.
It is this, O beloved, that I, in life and in your
mind,
Am as poised, as proud, as complete mentally
as you.
The secret of the joy of our life is a secret of
love and labor,
Of perfect equals, friends and lovers, a woman
and a man!

A WOMAN'S BELOVED

A PSALM

To what shall a woman liken her beloved,
And with what shall she compare him to do him honor?
He is like the close-folded new leaves of the woodbine, odorless, but sweet,
Flushed with a new and swiftly rising life,
Strong to grow and give glad shade in summer.
Even thus should a woman's beloved shelter her in her time of anguish.

And he is like the young robin, eager to try his wings,
For within soft stirring wings of the spirit has she cherished him,
And with the love of the mother bird shall she embolden him, that his flight may avail.

A woman's beloved is to her as the roots of the willow,
Long, strong, white roots, bedded lovingly in the dark.
Into the depths of her have gone the roots of his strength and of his pride,

That she may nourish him well and become
his fulfillment.
None may tear him from the broad fields where
he is planted!

A woman's beloved is like the sun rising upon
the waters, making the dark places
light,
And like the morning melody of the pine
trees.
Truly, she thinks the roses die joyously
If they are crushed beneath his feet.

A woman's beloved is to her a great void that
she may illumine,
A great king that she may crown, a great
soul that she may redeem.
And he is also the perfecting of life,
Flowers for the altar, bread for the lips,
wine for the chalice.

You that have known passion, think not that
you have fathomed love.
It may be that you have never seen Love's
face.
For love thrusts aside storm clouds of passion
to unveil the Heavens,
And, in the heart of a woman, only then is
love born.

To what shall I liken a woman's beloved,
And with what shall I compare him to do
him honor?
He is a flower, a song, a struggle, a wild storm,
And, at the last, he is redemption, power, joy,
fulfillment and perfect peace.

SONG OF THE BRIDE TO BE

A WOMAN'S EPITHALAMIUM

O claim me now, life calm and continent,
Sweet winged and spiritual, sane and free,
Give me that love for which my love is spent,
Give me new strength for what I yield to thee.
Into his arms I go with confidence,
A maiden, yet a woman for his sake,
His equal, fit to labor at his side,
Knowing not where the travail is, nor whence,
Ready to wring my heart till it shall break,
Ready to fight all wrongs by him defied.

Sweet are the roses I have known, ay fair
Are the white lilies that my hands have found
In my virginity, and yet I dare
To leave them all to bloom in younger ground,
And, into my chaste garden, call new life,
And flowers I know not, venture not to name,
But am prepared to love and wisely tend,

That there may be for me no petalled
strife,
No blossoms fallen from weight of heavy
shame,
That all may bloom divine for my
best friend.

Standing beneath the arches of a gate,
That gives grand entrance to the path un-
tried,
I tremble, seeing there my human fate,
To entrance all returning is denied,
And yet, the tremulous throb of the heart
I hush
With thoughts of him for whom I mutely
yield,
Whose human depths and heights are
mine to know,
Of whose warm blood I love the rise and
rush,
Whose life shall be most utterly revealed
To me, a unity of love or woe.

To-night the woman nature sings aloud
A song half pensive, wholly jubilant,
For all I leave, and for the beauty proud
That he may give, for days made militant.

I hear the solemn and announcing voice,
Foretelling in my heart the cry of birth
And promising fulfillment to our souls;
Ay, even now I hear one say, "Rejoice!
A child's sweet eyes are opened on the earth,
Whose young necessity our toil controls!"

Ah, for no mortal revel was I made,
A woman sane, not famished of desire,
Shall I meet his true eyes, for I am swayed
By no mere love of the lips; and I aspire
That sweet communion of the body bring
But nearer, time by time, the spirit's tryst,
And highest worship, in one blessed psalm
That to the great, white Father we shall sing,
For his high laws, seen dimly, through a mist.
O claim me now, life continent and calm!

FULFILLMENT

A BRIDE'S PSALM OF JOY

The graybeards had compassion on me in my day of rejoicing,
For they said, "She does not know—"
The snowy crowned old women shook tears from their eyes,
For they said, "She is innocent—"
The young men and women who had gone on before me smiled wistfully,
For they said, "She also is young—"
Even the cynics advised me,
For they thought that I was about to go the way of all flesh.
One and all, they saw my bud blasted and my sunlight shadowed,
My dream routed, my vision eclipsed, giving place to merely practical satisfaction;
They saw my soul besmirched, perhaps destroyed.

They warned me of disappointment that I might not be disappointed,
Of sadness, that I might not be too often sad,
Of pain, that I might not suffer too deeply,
Of the carnal, that I might be able, perchance, to save a partial soul alive.

Tears they tried to pour into my cup of rapture,
That a wonted taste might give no shock of bitterness.
They would have girded my waist with fire, in all kindliness,
That I might feel the less the brand of ruthless desire:
For they said, "There is somewhat of crape beneath every wedding veil!"

All this, because they loved me. And yet I went on my way heedless and confident,
Heedless of compassion and advice, confident that the warnings were vain,
Nourishing in my heart the bud of promise, warm with sunlight,
Refusing the tears and the firebrand;
For I had faith in the hands that held me, in the eyes that met mine,
In the proud pledge of his mind, in the beauty of his spirit—

Thus I went on my way.

. . . . . .

In the evening I slept, and in the morning I awoke and knocked at the door of my soul, demanding entrance;

And I asked, "What cheer, O Soul?
What of the hour of knowledge?
What of the day of fulfillment?
Then my soul arose and stood before me, naked and fearless,
And answered me proudly:

"Open the windows, that the old men and women may look in and see my sunlight!
Open the windows that the young men and women may catch the scent of my perfect blossom!
Open the windows that the music of my joy may go out to confound the cynics!
Tell them that I am not saddened, neither am I disappointed,
No, not for a fraction of time.
Show them that there is no suffering for me, save gladness,
That I am not at war with the flesh, nor is the flesh divided from me against me.
Lo, I am whole, sane, sound, more glorious than before,
For my dream is become actuality,
My vision is become fulfillment,
My ideal is become as God; He mounts His throne and reigns.
For me there are no tears, there is no brand of fire!"

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